

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Builder Banter

THE HOME DEPOT ACQUIRES WHITE CAP CONSTRUCTION

The Home Depot has entered into an agreement to acquire White Cap Construction Supply, a leading distributor of specialty hardware, tools and materials targeting large and medium sized construction contractors. [Source: Frame Building News, August 2004]

OSHA ENSURED CONSTRUCTION WORKER' SAFETY IN SOUTH FLORIDA

Federal safety inspectors fanned out across South Florida as part of a concentrated effort to enforce proper safety standards for construction workers only three weeks after two men were killed when a building collapsed on their Hobe Sound work site.

The Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration had planned this statewide effort before the accident because Florida has for several years ranked near the top of U.S. states for worker deaths. The construction industry is particularly hazardous, statistics show.

OSHA officials declined to say how many officers were out visiting work sites but said the inspections occurred across the state through the month of August. The inspectors came from other parts of the Southeast region and did regular checks of work sites, visited companies and tried to educate employees about safety. Companies found in violation were cited. [SOURCE: South Florida Sun-Sentinel, August 8, 2004]

SHORTAGE AFFECTING U.S. MARKET

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) is reporting that a shortage of building materials is continuing to impact house construction. In a survey, nearly one-third of respondents reported experiencing shortages of OSB and plywood, as well as wood panel products used for wall sheathing, floors and roofs. [SOURCE: Widman's Market Barometer, August 11, 2004, Vol. 6., No 16]

BAMBOO CURES EARTHQUAKES

Last December's earthquake in the Iranian city of Bam took a huge death toll, roughly 40,000 people. This was largely due to the collapse of thousands of mud-brick buildings. British and Indian engineers are working on developing earthquake-

proof housing using a cheap, ubiquitous material: bamboo. These engineers have designed a prototype house built around waterproofed bamboo sheet roofing and bamboo-reinforced concrete walls. To test the structure, the engineers took it to the Earthquake Engineering and Vibration Research Center in Bangalore, which has a state-of-the-art earthquake simulator. [SOURCE: Power, Matthew. Discover Magazine, August 2004]

BUILDER CONFIDENCE REBOUNDS STRONGLY IN OCTOBER

Robust buyer demand brought on by improving economic conditions, low mortgage rates, and strong house-price performance boosted builder confidence in the market for new single-family homes to its highest level of the year in October, according to the latest National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI). The HMI rose five points to 72 this month, more than offsetting a four-point decline in September and equaling its year-ago reading.

“Rates on long-term mortgages have averaged well below 6 percent for many weeks now, and adjustable-rate loans have been around 4 percent—providing a powerful incentive to buy a home,” noted Bobby Rayburn, NAHB president and a home and apartment builder from Jackson, MS. [SOURCE: NAHB Press Release, Oct. 18, 2004]

THE SHOW-ME HOUSE

Building a demonstration home with labeled products and systems, text and/or graphic signs describing technologies, manufacturer collateral, behind-the-wall cutaways and knowledgeable staff to fill in the blanks has several benefits. Potential home buyers can see how the innovative technologies the builder uses will affect the performance of their new home, save money on utilities and perhaps even match their value system. An added perk for the industry is that other builders can learn from them too. Here are a few to check out if you are in the area:

The Discovery House at High Plains Village and Centerra, Loveland, CO: McStain Neighborhoods’ Discovery House features an irrigation controller that captures local weather data to adjust irrigation flow and a nylon mesh rain screen behind the home’s exterior siding to prevent moisture intrusion.

The Green Demonstration Home at Summerset at Frick Park, Pittsburgh, PA: Built by Montgomery & Rust according to performance standards created with Building America team IBACOS, it includes energy-efficient lighting, soy-based expanding foam insulation and Carrier Corp.’s Infinity System, which integrates and manages temperature, humidity, air flow, ventilation, indoor air quality and zoning.

Casa Verde at the Venetian Golf & River Club, Venice, FL: Casa Verde uses high-efficiency air filtration systems, solar tubes for natural lighting and water-

conserving appliances in response to buyer demands. [SOURCE: Stromberg, Meghan. Professional Builder, July 2004]

Have an idea for items to include in this new department? Email them to builderbanter@sbcmag.info.

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